

**Department of  
Veterans Affairs**

# Memorandum

Date: May 21, 2012

From: Director, Saint Petersburg Audit Operations Division (52SP)

Subj: Close-out Memorandum: Review of Hotline Allegations Concerning Flight Training Benefits Provided Under the Post-9/11 GI Bill (Project Number: 2012-01081-R9-0070)

To: Director, Hotline Division (53E)

Thru: Deputy Assistant Inspector General for Audits and Evaluations (52A)

This review assessed allegations related to flight training benefits under the *Post-9/11 Veterans Educational Assistance Act of 2008* (Post-9/11 GI Bill) provided to eligible veterans receiving helicopter pilot training through Upper Limit Aviation (ULA) in Salt Lake City, Utah as part of a degree program provided by Salt Lake Community College (SLCC). The review objectives were to determine whether:

- SLCC and ULA flight school overcharged veterans for helicopter pilot training.
- ULA, through its partnership with SLCC, exceeded VA limits of 85 percent veteran enrollment for VA funded pilot training.
- ULA provided unsafe pilot training to eligible veterans.

## Background

The Post-9/11 GI Bill, effective August 1, 2009, provides financial support for education to veterans with at least 90 days of aggregate service on or after September 11, 2001, or veterans discharged with a service-connected disability after 30 days. The bill provides up to the maximum in-state tuition at accredited degree granting institutions. Eligible veterans also receive a monthly housing allowance and a stipend for books and supplies. Benefits for the program are administered by the Veterans Benefits Administration (VBA), Education Services. VBA received the same allegations from the complainant in December 2011 and determined that the allegations were unsubstantiated.

## Methodology

Our review focused on SLCC charges for veterans enrolled in helicopter pilot training during calendar year 2011. We conducted our fieldwork in February and March 2012, and visited SLCC in Salt Lake City, UT from March 20–21, 2012.

We reviewed controls to ensure that VA is not being overcharged by SLCC and ULA for helicopter pilot training under the Post-9/11 GI Bill. We examined billing records for both veterans and non-veterans to determine overall rates charged, and whether VA was being charged more for veterans than non-veterans for helicopter pilot training under the Post-9/11 GI Bill. We also verified SLCC veteran enrollment percentages did not exceed VA limits, and ULA is Federal Aviation Administration (FAA) approved to operate a flight school. We interviewed VBA and SLCC officials concerning benefits under the Post-9/11 GI Bill and the complainant's allegations and VBA's response.

The review was conducted in accordance with Quality Standards for Inspections published by the Council of the Inspectors General on Integrity and Efficiency. We planned and performed the review to obtain sufficient, appropriate evidence to provide a reasonable basis for our findings and conclusions based on our review objective. The evidence obtained provides a reasonable basis for our results.

## **Summary**

We did not substantiate the three allegations concerning overcharging for helicopter pilot training, exceeding veteran enrollment limitations, and flight school safety.

## **Allegation 1 Results**

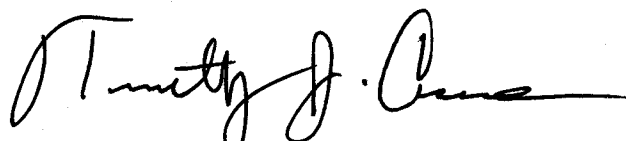
We did not substantiate the allegation that SLCC and ULA are overcharging VA for helicopter pilot training. The complainant alleges that VA is being charged approximately \$1,150 per hour for flight training under the degree program with SLCC, which is 4.5 times the \$250 rate the complainant stated is charged by a nearby flight school for comparable training. Billing records indicated VA was charged a comparable hourly rate of \$250 to \$265 for this training. Our review of SLCC records also indicated SLCC and ULA charged veterans and non-veterans the same rate for helicopter pilot training in accordance with provisions of the Post-9/11 GI Bill.

## **Allegation 2 Results**

We did not substantiate the allegation that SLCC and ULA are exceeding limits on veteran enrollment for VA funded helicopter pilot training. The veteran enrollment rate of 34 percent for this training at SLCC and ULA is below the 85 percent VA limit for calendar year 2011.

## **Allegation 3 Results**

We did not substantiate the allegation that ULA provides unsafe pilot training to eligible veterans. FAA holds the authority to issue and revoke approval for the operation of flight schools. FAA requirements for approval include being deemed safe to operate. VBA had a copy of ULA's FAA certificate approving operations through July 31, 2012.



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